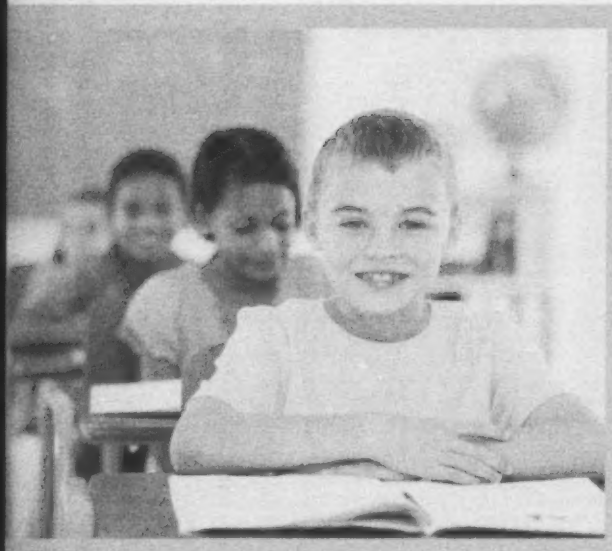
EDUCATION QUALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE



2015–2018 Business Plan

December 10, 2014

Education Quality and Accountability Office

EQAO

Office de la qualité et de la responsabilité en éducation

OQRE

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The purpose of the Agency is to support improvements to student learning by measuring their achievement in reading, writing and mathematics and using this credible data to provide assurance of the quality of the public education system in Ontario and the accountability of school boards.

To achieve this, the following 5 strategic priorities have been established to guide the agency's work.

"BEST OF CLASS" ASSESSMENTS

SUPPORTING STUDENT PROGRESS

BUILDING CAPACITY

VALUABLE RESEARCH DATA

EFFECTIVE BUSINESS PRACTICES

_____ _____

Minister of Education Date

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Introduction

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) was established in 1996 based on a recommendation of Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning. The commission consulted extensively with teachers, parents, students, and taxpayers. It concluded that province-wide assessments of all students would contribute to greater quality and accountability in the publicly funded school system. EQAO was created as an independent agency to conduct the assessments, and gather and report objective information from our schools.

EQAO plays an important role in Ontario education by conducting province-wide tests at key points in every student's primary, junior, and secondary education and by reporting the results to the public and the school system. The tests measure student performance in reading, writing, and mathematics in relation to a common provincial standard and provide valuable information on the performance of Ontario's education system.

At a Level 1, the student has demonstrated the required knowledge and skills in limited ways. Achievement falls much below the provincial standard. A Level 2 means the student has demonstrated some of the required knowledge and skills; the student's achievement is approaching the provincial standard.

The provincial standard (Level 3) corresponds to a B– to B+ or 70 per cent to 79 per cent in the classroom. Students who meet the provincial standard have demonstrated the required knowledge and skills to a considerable degree and are likely prepared for work in the next grade. A Level 4 means the student has demonstrated the required knowledge and skills thoroughly or to a high degree. Achievement exceeds the provincial standard. The assessments are developed and scored in a way that ensures the results can be compared from one year to the next.

The province-wide assessments are directly based on *The Ontario Curriculum*—which is what teachers are teaching in the classroom every day. EQAO works with teachers, who bring their classroom expertise to develop the tests, score them and analyze the results. The assessments are written by students at the end of the primary and junior divisions in elementary school, which allows time for interventions to support their successful progress. Compared to many Canadian and international jurisdictions, this is a minimal level of testing to provide an independent gauge of how well students are learning the curriculum and acquiring fundamental skills.

In 2011, the Board of Directors engaged in a strategic discussion regarding the positioning of the agency, the current assessment model and technology directions. Based on that dialogue, the board identified the following themes to inform the work of the agency further and develop this business plan. The themes identified included:

1. Increase awareness and appreciation by parents and the public about EQAO's role;
2. Provide interpretation of results based on research and analysis as part of public releases or in addition to public releases;
3. Provide reports that pinpoint areas for attention to improve student learning;
4. Provide resources to facilitate governance and accountability by school boards;
5. Enhance awareness of EQAO's role as an arms-length source of information about the quality of the public school system and for information school boards can use for setting a student achievement agenda;
6. Continue the ongoing scrutiny of EQAO's assessment model to ensure the agency is relevant and that the model of collecting and reporting information is effective;
7. EQAO will continuously reassess its resources, such as technological, human and financial to maintain and further enhance its business operations.

EQAO is currently undertaking its strategic planning process that will set out priorities for the next 3-5 years. This business plan outlines activities for the 2015-2018 periods, aligning with the agency's current business cycle and strategic priorities. The new 3-5 year business cycle will be implemented in the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

Mandate

The agency's mandate is to conduct province-wide tests at key points in every student's primary, junior and secondary education and report the results to educators, parents and the public.

Values

- **EQAO values** all students having the opportunity to reach their highest possible level of achievement.
- **EQAO values** its role as a service to educators, parents, students, government and the public in support of teaching and learning in the classroom.
- **EQAO values** credible evidence that informs professional practice and focuses attention on interventions that improve student success.
- **EQAO values** research that informs large-scale assessment and classroom practice.
- **EQAO values** the dedication and expertise of Ontario's educators and their involvement in all aspects of the assessment processes and the positive difference their efforts make in student outcomes.
- **EQAO values** the delivery of its programs and services with equivalent quality in both English and French.

Legislated Objectives

The objects of the agency were established by the legislature and set out in the *Education Quality and Accountability Act* (*EQAO Act*). EQAO is required to

- evaluate the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education.
- develop tests and require or undertake the administering and marking of tests of pupils in elementary and secondary schools.
- develop systems for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education.
- research and collect information on assessing academic achievement.
- evaluate the public accountability of boards and collect information on strategies for improving that accountability.
- report to the public and to the Minister of Education on the results of tests and generally on the quality and effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education and on the public accountability of boards.
- make recommendations, in its reports to the public and to the Minister of Education, on any matter related to the quality or effectiveness of elementary and secondary school education or to the public accountability of boards.

Governance Framework

As an independent Operational Service Agency (formerly Schedule IV) established to deliver assessment programs that yield objective and reliable information on student achievement, EQAO is governed by a board of directors appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. As outlined in the *Education Quality and Accountability Office Act, 1996* (EQAO Act), seven to nine directors may be appointed to the board for a term specified by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

The agency board is accountable, through the chair, to the Minister of Education and is responsible for setting the goals, objectives, policies and strategic directions of the agency according to its mandate as defined by the *EQAO Act*, the Memorandum of Understanding and the policies and directives established by the Minister of Education and the Management Board of Cabinet.

The board of directors is accountable to the people of Ontario by maintaining its arm's-length relationship with the provincial government; by setting strategic policy directions for achieving its mandate; by setting priorities for achieving excellence in the delivery of Ontario's large-scale assessment program; and by communicating with the public and the education community.

The agency chair is accountable to the minister and provides leadership to the agency by keeping the minister informed; by submitting, on behalf of the agency board, the business plan and annual report; and by carrying out the roles and responsibilities assigned to the chair by the Management Board of Cabinet directives, the *EQAO Act*, the Memorandum of Understanding and the board's governance policies. The chair also ensures the integrity of the board's processes, represents the board to outside parties, and as per the *Public Services of Ontario Act* (PSOA), serves as the ethics executive of the agency for all appointees.

The board meets regularly and conducts business according to the *EQAO Act*, its bylaws, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the *PSOA*. An Audit and Finance Committee has been established to support the board in ensuring that EQAO exercises due diligence in maintaining an effective financial-control framework. Other board committees are assigned as required to reinforce the board's role.

The board's connection to EQAO operations is through the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO is accountable to the agency's board for overseeing the management and operations of the agency, for the supervision of the agency's staff and for carrying out the roles and responsibilities assigned by the board, the *EQAO Act*, the MOU and the agency directives set out by the Management Board of Cabinet. Under the *PSOA*, the CEO serves as the ethics executive for all staff.

Staff members of the agency are accountable to the CEO for carrying out the roles and responsibilities assigned to them by the CEO and as articulated in the annual business and performance plans.

Conflict of Interest Framework

When the agency was established, EQAO instituted conflict of interest policies and practices, including those articulated in Bylaw No. 1, 1997 and the board of directors' governance policy regarding code of conduct and conflict of interest, to govern the ethical practices of EQAO staff and members of the board of directors.

With the passing of the *Public Service of Ontario Act* (PSOA), 2006 and Ontario Regulation 381/07, new conflict of interest provisions were introduced for all public servants. According to the *PSOA*, all public servants, including part-time appointees to public bodies such as EQAO Board members, must comply with the provisions of the Act and the Regulation. In addition, this new legislation established a Conflict of Interest Commissioner (COIC) and clarified the lines of accountability for ethical issues, by introducing the role of Ethics Executive, which for the Board of Directors is the Chair and for staff is the CEO.

The Lieutenant Governor in Council makes appointments to the EQAO Board of Directors. As part of the appointments process, all candidates must complete a conflict of interest declaration so that any potential overlap between undertakings outside their public service duties and their role on the board are understood in advance. This information is retained by the agency.

According to Ontario's Conflict of Interest Commissioner, it is common for the government to appoint individuals with subject matter expertise to its agencies for the benefit of the work of these agencies and, in that way, the people of Ontario. The EQAO Board of Directors meets 3 to 4 times per year and, as a policy governance body, they provide strategic guidance and ensure fiscal accountability of the agency. They do not make decisions regarding the day to day operations of the agency. Board members are required to be aware of the conflict of interest provisions and their obligations as part-time public servants to mitigate the potential for any conflict.

Under the Board of Directors Governance Policies, EQAO staff and board members are required to disclose annually any external involvements that might produce a conflict or at any time during the year should a potential conflict arise. The Chair, as Ethics Executive, requires a standing item on each meeting agenda for the disclosure of any new involvements that could be deemed as real or potential conflicts. EQAO staff members are required to declare real or potential conflicts to the CEO, as guided by the agency's operational protocols and procedures.

All members of the EQAO board and staff are attentive to their responsibilities to comply with conflict of interest policies and legislation and to act on these obligations on a regular basis. The Ethics Executives for the agency are satisfied that appropriate measures are in place to ensure continued compliance with the conflict of interest legislation and that EQAO board members and staff are performing their duties in a non-partisan, professional, ethical and competent manner.

EQAO's Assessment Program

EQAO's full-census province-wide assessments produce objective and reliable evidence that adds to the current knowledge about student learning and is an important tool for guiding improvement at the individual, school, school board and provincial levels. The agency's accountability framework is centered on these "best of class" curriculum-based assessments, which are conducted in both official languages and developed in formats that accommodate all students.

The agency tests all students in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of the primary division (Grade 3) and at the end of the junior division (Grade 6); in mathematics in Grade 9; and in literacy in Grade 10 through the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT/TPCL). Success on the OSSLT/TPCL satisfies a graduation requirement.

Assessment	Grade	Subjects	Year First Administered	Number of 2013–2014 Students Assessed (Full Census)
Primary division	Grade 3 (end of primary)	Reading, writing, mathematics	1997	English: 127 505 Grade 3 students in 3340 schools
				French:7850 Grade 3 students in 274 schools
Junior division	Grade 6 (end of junior)	Reading, writing, mathematics	1999	English: 127 286 Grade 6 students in 3171 schools
				French: 6832 Grade 6 students in 270 schools
Grade 9	Grade 9	Mathematics	2001	English: 95 914 Grade 9 students in academic mathematics in 686 schools and 38 181 Grade 9 students in applied mathematics in 705 schools
				French: 4051 Grade 9 students in academic mathematics in 92 schools and 1530 Grade 9 students in applied mathematics in 88 schools
OSSLT/TPCL	Grade 10	Literacy	2001	English: 141 815 first-time eligible and 59 080 previously eligible students fully participating
				French: 5496 first-time eligible and 1593 previously eligible students fully participating

Modernizing Assessment Operations

EQAO has begun a new, multi-year project to move its provincial assessments from paper-and-pencil to computer-based. The purpose of this move is ultimately to

- bring the provincial assessments in line with the digital classroom that plays an increasing part in education;
- make the assessments more engaging and accessible for students by allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills of curriculum expectations in a variety of ways;
- broaden the evidence EQAO can provide about student learning and achievement;
- offer assessments with built-in accommodations for students who need them;
- provide schools with more flexibility in scheduling the assessments and simplify the logistics around administration;
- improve the consistency of assessment administration across Ontario schools while increasing assessment security and, in certain cases, providing the results more quickly;
- leverage technology to enhance the creation, delivery and reporting of EQAO assessments to stay current with modern large-scale assessment practices and
- reduce the environmental impact of Ontario's provincial assessment program

Initially, EQAO will recreate the paper assessment online and then explore more innovative forms of assessment. This gradual approach will allow students, the school system and EQAO to learn and transition together in the least disruptive way possible. The move to computer-based assessments aligns with the Ministry's latest vision for Ontario's education system.

During the fall of this fiscal year, Grade 10 students will have an opportunity to volunteer to write the OSSLT online. Students who are successful on the online assessment in the fall will have officially met their literacy requirement and will not have to take the OSSLT during the regularly scheduled administration in spring 2016.

Students who are not successful on the fall online assessment will have the opportunity to take it again during the regularly scheduled administration in spring 2016. Both online and paper versions of the OSSLT will be available to students for the spring 2016 assessment. EQAO's vision is that the OSSLT will eventually be primarily online with paper versions available as a special accommodation when needed.

The move to online assessments is being done with the same rigour with which EQAO does all its work. The assessment program will continue to be developed, administered and scored by Ontario educators. The technical quality of EQAO assessments has been and will continue to be the hallmark of the provincial assessment program. Research, trial runs, system checks and quality assurance are fundamental aspects of the project. Questions related to equity, availability of technology at schools, assessment security, assessment validity, reliability and comparability are all being closely studied and addressed. A section on the EQAO Web site dedicated to the transition to online assessments provides regular updates and offers an avenue for feedback from stakeholders and the public.

After the successful implementation of the OSSLT online, EQAO plans to continue moving its other assessment programs to an online model, focusing on the Grade 9 assessment of mathematics. Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, EQAO will conduct research, field testing, and practice tests to inform implementation. Administration of Grade 9 online assessments are planned for the 2017-18 school year.

National and International Assessments

EQAO currently administers five large-scale national or international random-sample assessments on behalf of the government of Ontario every three to five years: Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP), and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Ontario will also be participating in the inaugural administration of the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS).

These random-sample assessments provide a general sense of how Ontario students are doing relative to students in other jurisdictions or education systems and contribute to the larger picture of student achievement in Canada in the areas of reading, mathematics, and science. Both the public and education policy-makers benefit from these high-level indications of how students in Ontario are positioned in relation to their peers across the country and around the world in specific subjects. The results from these assessments are a good complement to the information gained through the provincial full-census assessments.

Assessment	Partner Organization.0	Approximate Age/Grade	Subjects	Number of Students Assessed (Sample)	Assessment Schedule
TIMSS	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement	9 year olds/ Grade 4	Mathematics, science	3500	2015, 2019
PIRLS ePIRLS	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement	9 year olds/ Grade 4	Reading	4000	2016, 2021
TIMSS	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement	13 year olds/ Grade 8	Mathematics, science	3500	2015, 2019
PCAP	Council of Ministers of Education, Canada	13 year olds/ Grade 8	Reading, science, mathematics	4600	2016, 2019
PISA	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	15 year olds	Reading, mathematics, science	3000	2015, 2018
ICILS	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement	13 year olds/ Grade 8	Computer Literacy	TBD	2018

2015-2018 Strategic Framework

EQAO's strategic framework includes five strategic priorities and related operational activities.

PRIORITY 1: "BEST OF CLASS" ASSESSMENTS

A commitment to provide credible evidence of student learning based on The Ontario Curriculum.

The agency's full-census assessment program measures the quality and contributes to the accountability of the education system in Ontario. EQAO will administer its province-wide assessment programs at the end of the primary and junior divisions (Grades 3 and 6 respectively), in Grade 9 and in Grade 10. EQAO will maintain its "best of class" assessments through ongoing scrutiny of the current assessment model to ensure the agency is relevant and that the model of collecting and reporting information is effective. Over the next three years, EQAO will leverage technology to move its assessments to an online format starting with the OSSLT followed by the Grade 9 assessment of mathematics.

As an arms-length agency, EQAO independently reports achievement results to all audiences, including all political parties, fulfilling its commitment to be an impartial source of information about the quality of the public school system and information that school boards can use for setting a student achievement agenda. Furthermore, the agency strives to increase awareness and appreciation by parents and the public about EQAO's role.

EQAO will lead Ontario's participation in national and international assessments. The results of these assessments provide an indication of student learning at the provincial level relative to other provinces and countries and provide evidence of the quality of the Ontario education system. The agency will work with the Ministry of Education to establish a plan for participation in these tests, and to consider levels of participation that will be influential to policy development and student learning in the province.

PRIORITY 2: SUPPORTING STUDENT PROGRESS

A commitment to be the integrator of a broad range of evidence that identifies where interventions can be made to ensure that all students have the opportunity to reach their highest possible level of achievement and a commitment to increasing accountability of the publicly funded school system.

As the independent source of objective student achievement data, EQAO is recognized as an authoritative centre for information about assessments and how to use data. EQAO is guided by the principle that it provides reports that lead to improved practices at the local level. As such, the agency continues to provide interpretive reports that identify areas of achievement and point to areas requiring improvement. EQAO will further build on its work to support schools in improvement planning by presenting analytical information that may be used to increase the accountability of school boards.

EQAO will provide samples of student work that concretely illustrate the descriptions of standards at each level so teachers can understand the differences between achievement levels.

The agency provides classroom assessment materials and a user guide to primary and junior teachers linking detailed descriptions of achievement standards and examples of student work that reflect their levels of achievements.

EQAO will expand the evidence available for elementary and secondary schools. Information on global competencies will be included in the provincial reports, in addition to the results of the Grade 9 mathematics assessment and the OSSLT/TPCL. EQAO will work to ensure parents receive resources and information that support student progress.

PRIORITY 3: BUILDING CAPACITY

A commitment to build capacity for the use of data through service to educators, parents, government and the public.

EQAO will provide evidence to principals regarding their school's achievement and help them understand how to interpret and use assessment data to improve student outcomes. The data will allow them to identify areas that need attention. EQAO will support Principals through a robust application that will be developed and enhanced with input from administrators.

EQAO will involve teachers in all stages of the assessment cycle by engaging their participation in committees and direct assignments with EQAO.

EQAO will use various media to expand its services to all stakeholders. In addition to the conventional media approaches, further use will be made of the Web.

EQAO is committed to providing resources for parents that allow them to be informed partners in their child's education and recommending how schools and parents might best engage in discussions related to EQAO results.

PRIORITY 4: VALUABLE RESEARCH DATA

A commitment to demonstrate that all practices of the agency are grounded in research-based knowledge.

EQAO will enhance the knowledge base of independent researchers and the education community by continuing with its research program, which informs large-scale assessment and supports educational policy research and the development of other sources of evidence to support student learning and positive change.

EQAO will develop and publish interpretative reports based on the findings of its research projects and the analysis of its data. These reports will be a means of drawing attention to areas of concern and needing improvement within the public education system.

EQAO will engage internationally recognized scholars as expert advisors and as a resource to staff to help maintain international excellence.

PRIORITY 5: EFFECTIVE BUSINESS PRACTICES

A commitment to strategically aligned business practices that enhance the agency's ability to focus on and deliver key priorities and commitments.

EQAO will continuously reassess its resources, such as technological, human and financial to maintain and further enhance its business operations.

Given the current economic climate, EQAO will comply with any mandated adjustments to staff and/or budget. EQAO will continue to develop appropriate policies and procedures to maintain effective and efficient operations. This includes the regular review and enhancement of EQAO's governance framework relating to business policies, practices and fiscal and risk management, as required.

EQAO will build a strong staff team with a knowledge base to perform the specialized tasks of the agency while maintaining effective day-to-day operation. Attracting, retaining and developing people with the range of skills and expertise required for this unique program, and strategically using technology to enhance operations, will be supported by effective human resource management practices, including recognition of staff contributions. The agency will maintain effective practices and controls and will leverage technology to support the enterprise.

Third Party Partnerships

EQAO engages Ontario educators in every step of the assessment cycle from development to administration to scoring. The agency is dedicated to continuing to work with the education community to ensure its test data are used to enhance classroom instruction, support improved student achievement and contribute to the ongoing increase in the quality and efficacy of Ontario's public education system. EQAO has executed an extensive program of collaboration and outreach that has included the participation of thousands of French- and English-language educators in various activities.

EQAO's Scholars in Residence Program provides psychometric and assessment expertise for operational issues in the agency's assessment programs. These scholars are internationally recognized experts in the field of psychometrics, assessment and research. They partner with EQAO to provide direct assistance, mentoring and professional development for EQAO staff. Scholars in Residence bring a high level of expertise in assisting EQAO to develop and maintain best of class operations and to hold the agency to the highest world standards for large-scale assessment programs. They also provide assistance with the EQAO research agenda.

The Psychometric Expert Panel (PEP) provides guidance to EQAO by considering various operational and psychometric issues and practices associated with the large-scale assessment program. The panel is comprised of 7 individuals from national and international large scale assessment organizations and/or academic institutions. The panel is asked to consider proposed methodologies and processes and to provide advice that will assist EQAO in ensuring that its assessment program continues to meet best practice standards for large-scale assessments.

The agency is collaborating with senior scholars and researchers to design, develop and conduct foundational research to evaluate and provide relevant, responsible evidence of impacts of full-day kindergarten on student, classroom and school experiences. An extension of this partnership is a steering committee comprised of EQAO staff, university scholars and researchers and school board researchers and data experts. Work in this area will lead meaningful conversations about how to track results over time for students participating in full day kindergarten and for schools offering the program.

As EQAO moves to online assessments, the agency is working closely with students and parents, teachers and school principals, school board administrators and public policy makers to obtain the greatest possible benefit with the least possible disruption, and will continue to do so at each stage.

In addition to working with our advisory committee of education system representatives and our panel of external psychometric experts, we have established an Equity Council specifically for this project. This group of external experts will provide advice at each stage of the process. Their input will help identify and mitigate any discriminatory biases and systemic barriers to ensure equality of opportunity for students regardless of their background or circumstances.

On behalf of Ontario, EQAO also works in partnership with the following national and international organizations:

- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to administer the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA);
- Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to administer the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP);
- International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) to administer the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS and ePIRLS), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS) .

The agency administers each of these assessments every three to five years on a rotating basis and the results contribute to a larger report on student achievement in Canada in the areas of reading, mathematics and science.

Environmental Scan: External Factors

This year's environmental scan has identified key factors that the agency has considered when establishing the business priorities for the year ahead.

With the ongoing challenge of providing quality public services while maintaining a balanced budget, the Ontario government is continuously re-evaluating the best means of allocating the taxpayers funds. Balancing the budget by 2017-2018 will require that the government significantly reduce rates of growth in program spending. In order to meet its fiscal plan, the government has focused on finding savings in education while protecting the gains made over the past eight years, such as higher student achievement and graduation rates. That means keeping class sizes small, continuing to roll-out full-day kindergarten and keeping teachers in the classroom.

While the Ontario government is seeking cost efficiencies, education remains a priority. Following the election on June 12, 2014, the government of Ontario is now in a majority situation with the governing Liberal Party of Ontario holding 59 out of 107 legislature seats. The Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario holds 27 seats whereas the New Democratic Party holds 21 seats. Wynne's victory is the fourth straight mandate for the Liberal Party of Ontario.[1]

Under the government's Achieving Excellence vision, Ontario is committed to the success and well-being of every student and child. The overall skill and knowledge level of Ontario's students must continue to rise to ensure that they become personally successful, economically productive and engaged citizens. At the same time, the achievement gap must be closed between students who excel and students who struggle because of personal, cultural or academic barriers. There are several achievements that have helped Ontario further its success, including the following:

- Ontario students were among the top performers in computer information literacy (CIL) on the first-ever administration of the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS), in 2013. No participating jurisdiction's students performed better than Ontario's. Ontario's CIL achievement results were significantly above the international average. In addition, survey results from ICILS 2013 show that Ontario students and teachers are using information and communication technology (ICT) for learning and have positive attitudes about its value.
- It is clear that Ontario students are getting a high-quality education. Our students are well-positioned for a successful future — within Canada, Ontario or anywhere in the world.
- In addition, the Ministry of Education continues to host international delegations examining best practices in education reform and student success. By coordinating these visits, the ministry continues to build more opportunities for staff to learn from what is working in other jurisdictions as well as share lessons learned from efforts to improve educational outcomes for Ontario students.

The Ministry of Education continues to implement initiatives that help ensure more students succeed including Full-day kindergarten, Safe and Inclusive Schools, Equity and Inclusive Education, the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, the Student Success Strategy, the Aboriginal Education Strategy, and Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

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[1] 2014/06/13, Loney, H., Four More Years: Ontario Awakes to a Wynne-Led Liberal Majority, *Ontario Election 2014*, http://globalnews.ca/news/1390021/ontario-election-2014-who-will-form-the-next-provincial-government/.

Attention paid to standardized testing in other jurisdictions including the following:

- **Alberta** – In September 2014, Alberta began phasing out Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) and piloting new Student Learning Assessments (SLAs), which are digitally based assessment tools, for Grade 3 students. Full implementation for Grade 3 is expected by September 2015. Pilots for Grades 6 and 9 are scheduled to begin in 2015 and 2016, respectively. The new SLAs will better inform student learning by collecting valuable information at the beginning of the school year, while also including interactive approaches to help educators and parents understand how well students can apply what they have learned.
- **British Columbia** – undergoing an initiative to transform and modernize the B.C. Education system with the focus on Curriculum and Assessment.
- **United States** –the Common Core State Standards begun in the 2014-2015 school year. The Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy build on the best of existing standards and reflect the skills and knowledge students will need to succeed in college, career, and life. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium will have the summative assessment available for use by member states in the spring of 2015.
- **Australia** - The federal government has proposed expanding the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing to include science tests. This test is supposed to inform decisions to close the gender gap in science performance and track how students are progressing in sciences, as Australia's goal is to be a top performing country in science by 2025.

Environmental Scan: Internal Factors

EQAO and its board of directors have established an effective governance framework that supports the agency's accountability to the people of Ontario. The framework includes the Board by-laws, the procurement approval and delegation of authority framework, the board governance and conflict policies and internal operational protocols, developed based on the agency's legislative guiding instruments, such as the EQAO Act, the Memorandum of Understanding and the Public Services of Ontario Act and the Agency Establishment and Accountability Directive.

EQAO continues to focus on activities that support the agency's "best of class" approaches, including how best to serve stakeholders in their efforts to improve student learning, analyzing results and ensuring that the public release of results highlight areas of success, and areas requiring further attention.

The agency will continue to leverage technology to further improve its business processes and service to its stakeholders. EQAO will implement key information technology initiatives and will continue to incorporate technological solutions into its business. Having students write tests online is only one component of EQAO's efforts to modernize the provincial assessment program. Other aspects include a more extensive use of technology for test creation and scoring.

EQAO is dedicated to developing retention strategies and professional development activities to enhance their expertise and job satisfaction. The agency also supports and fosters employees' talents through professional development that complements their growth. In addition, the agency has a succession plan in place to ensure that there is always an appropriate complement of staff. This strategy assists in reducing staffing turnaround, which is one cost effective measure used in this strained economic times.

As in previous years, the agency continues to provide assessments within a reduced budget, which was achieved through operating efficiencies. Given the economic climate the agency will continue efforts to manage its operations in accordance with its level of funding.

EQAO is finalizing its strategic planning process to set out its business planning cycle for the next three to five years. The Board of Directors and CEO Bruce Rodrigues is consulting with stakeholders to explore new initiatives that can further support the agency's mandate.

Overview of Planned Activities for 2015–2018

EQAO will continue its work to support the agency's core business and strategic priorities, including:

- consulting experts in the field of large-scale assessment.
- providing timely and useful reports and resources to educators to help inform improvement planning and reflective practice.
- building the capacity of educators and parents to help them understand how to interpret and use data to improve student outcomes.
- commissioning research that furthers EQAO's mandate.
- maintaining business structures that allow the agency to run effectively and efficiently.

In addition, EQAO will continue to work on a number of initiatives designed to support the board's strategic directions and complement the agency's current work. These initiatives include:

- finalize strategic planning through stakeholder consultations and create new strategic priorities for the upcoming three to five year business cycle.
- Implement a brand strategy for EQAO
- based on a scholarly review of the literature, develop an analysis and reporting plan to share findings of impacts for students and schools of full-day kindergarten and trends in student results as they progress through school and write EQAO's assessments.
- increase the public's awareness and appreciation of EQAO's role through public release of assessment results as well as analytical and interpretive reports.
- Launch the new public Web site.
- Engage stakeholders through social media
- Modernizing Assessment Operations (MAO) Initiative:
    - Implement online scoring for all assessments
    - Provide a voluntary online administration of the OSSLT/TPCL in November 2015 that will count towards the literacy requirement if students are successful
    - Provide both online and paper-and-pencil options for administering the OSSLT/TPCL in March 2016
    - Research, field and practice tests of the Grade 9 assessment of mathematics beginning in 2016-17 school year, with administration of Grade 9 online assessments planned for the 2017-18 school year

PERFORMANCE MEASURES 2015–2018

The following 5 strategic priorities and associated goals, objectives and measures have been established to guide the agency's work.

PRIORITY 1: "BEST OF CLASS" ASSESSMENTS

A commitment to provide credible evidence of student learning based on The Ontario Curriculum.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2015–2018 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*
1.1 Maintain the quality and integrity of Ontario's large-scale full-census assessment programs.	▪ Incorporate leading edge *assessment practices* gained through research on large-scale assessment (e.g. jurisdictional reviews, Psychometric Expert Panel, Scholars in Residence) or through work with external experts.	▪ Continue enhancements to assessment practices including: ✓ Apply target Test Information Functions in the construction of tests ✓ Maintain equating process as verified by research findings
	▪ Develop and obtain high-quality curriculum-based assessment materials and items through rigorous development, field test and committee review processes.	▪ 100% of the items match the expectations of the *Ontario curriculum.*
	▪ Ensure that proper administration guidelines and systematic approaches are followed to ensure the quality and integrity of data.	▪ Assign Quality Assurance monitors to visit a random sample of schools that represents all school boards in the province over a three-year period.
		▪ After scoring, implement a system of targeted bin checks in which schools have been identified, in the past or currently, with issues through sources such as collusion analyses, alleged test administration irregularities, large increases in schools' results, issues envelopes and range finding.
		▪ 100% of educators indicate that administration guidelines are clear and easy to understand.
		▪ 80% of educators surveyed rate the responses received through the call centre as useful or very useful. ▪ Collect feedback and address matters from stakeholders on online assessments.
	▪ Ensure that systematic scoring processes are in place to ensure scoring accuracy to maintain the agency as a leader in these processes at or above best of class standards.	▪ 100% of scorers receive training and must pass a qualifying test before being allowed to score.
		▪ 100% of scorers not meeting accuracy requirements for exact plus adjacent agreement on daily validity papers are either retrained or released.
		▪ Monitor scoring validity[2] to ensure consistency among scorers to maintain high levels of accuracy: ✓ 75% exact agreement on a 3 point rubric ✓ 70% on a 4 point rubric; 65% on 5 point rubric; 60% on 6 point rubric ✓ 95%exact plus adjacent agreement on all rubrics.

[2] The validity statistic is a measure of scorers' accuracy of scoring as compared to that of expert scorers.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2015–2018 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*
		✓ Attend to and address any differences in scoring process ensuing from the transition from paper scoring to online scoring.
	▪ Publish an annual technical report on the validity, reliability and overall technical quality of all assessments to demonstrate the stature of the agency's work.	▪ For March 2016, publish the 2015 Technical Report that confirms the overall technical quality of the assessments through reporting on the following: ✓ test reliability will be higher than 0.75 for all assessments ✓ classification consistency and accuracy will be above 0.85 for all assessments ✓ Scorer agreement on individual test items will be 95% exact plus adjacent ✓ item statistics: item difficulty will be in the range of 0.25 to 0.95 and point-biserial correlations will be at or above 0.20 for all items ✓ a description of Item Response Theory (IRT) calibration and equating ✓ Differential Item Functioning (DIF) statistics for all items.
1.2 Report to the government, educators, parents and the public in a manner that demonstrates the quality and accountability of Ontario's education system.	▪ Present analytical information in a format that will enable stakeholders to interpret and use the reports and increase accountability.	▪ Public release of provincial results for each annual assessment will occur within 12 weeks of administration for Primary/Junior, Grade 9 Mathematics and the OSSLT/TPCL.
		▪ Publish EQAO's annual Elementary and Secondary School provincial reports.
		▪ 85% of educators surveyed through the QA monitor survey are satisfied with the reports posted on EQAO website.
		▪ Increase the public's awareness and appreciation of EQAO's role through public release of assessment results as well as analytical and interpretive reports.
1.3 As per Ministry's mandate, Co-ordinate Ontario's participation in national and international assessment projects.	▪ Administer national and international assessments to samples of students to enable reporting overall results for Ontario.	▪ Administer TIMSS 2015; prepare public report by December 2016 ▪ Administer PISA 2015; prepare public report by December 2016 ▪ Administer PCAP full administration in 2016; prepare public report 2017 ▪ Administer PIRLS and ePIRLS full assessments in 2016; prepare public reports 2017 ▪ Consult with the Ministry on Ontario's participation in PISA 2018 and ICLIS 2018
		▪ Administer PIRLS and ePIRLS field test in 2015 ▪ Administer PCAP field test in spring of 2015

PRIORITY 2: SUPPORTING STUDENT PROGRESS

A commitment to be the integrator of a broad range of evidence that identifies areas where interventions can be made to ensure that all students have the opportunity to reach their highest possible level of achievement.

GOALS	OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES	2015–2018 PERFORMANCE MEASURES
2.1 Integrate and report on evidence a broad range of evidence to assist educators and board trustees to better interpret results and facilitate progress.	▪ Provide longitudinal data as a useful resource for educators.	▪ Continue to incorporate longitudinal data into school, board, and provincial reports, and provide interpretive analysis and discussion in the provincial reports
		▪ Continue to report longitudinal student achievement results on Individual Student Reports (ISRs), and where applicable, data files for school boards for Grade 3 to Grade 6 to Grade 9 and to the OSSLT/TPCL.
	▪ Report on the first full-day kindergarten cohort in a meaningful manner	▪ Provide a report of findings related to impacts for students and schools of full-day kindergarten and trends in student results as they progress through school and write EQAO's primary assessments. ▪ Provide ongoing analyses reports about the achievement, attitudes and behaviours and contextual factors of students who participated in FDK in subsequent years and track the performance of these students as they progress through their schooling.
	▪ Report data and evidence that can benefit educator instruction and student achievement.	▪ Provide school-board staff with an interactive reporting Web application on the secure Web site. Provide enhancements to the reporting application for principals.
		▪ Continue to provide achievement results from previous assessments (Grade 3 and 6) on Individual Student Reports for Grade 9 and the OSSLT/TPCL.
2.2 Ensure that parents and students are able to use data and other evidence to maximize student achievement.	▪ Provide resources and effective strategies to support student progress.	▪ Provide achievement results from previous assessments (Grade 3 and 6) on Individual Student Reports for Grade 9 and the OSSLT/TPCL.
		▪ Distribute the elementary school and secondary school parents' guides to schools for all students who will be writing EQAO tests in the upcoming year. ▪ Make these guides available on-line in multiple languages. ▪ Support principals and school councils in best practices for using school level EQAO results

PRIORITY 3: BUILDING CAPACITY

A commitment to build capacity for the use of data through service to educators, parents, government and the public.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2015–2018 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*
3.1 Promote the use of EQAO data for system-wide improvement.	▪ Guide policy and practice through an increased understanding of broader trends, comparative data and areas of concern through public release of results and other public reporting throughout the year.	▪ Identify and offer support in using EQAO data and resources to schools that continue to experience significant challenges in meeting the provincial achievement standards. ▪ Facilitate collaborative coaching sessions using an inquiry stance around the effective use of EQAO data and resources to improve teaching and learning. ▪ Using the model followed in creating the EQAO Reporting application for elementary and secondary school staffs, develop an EQAO Reporting site for members of the public.
	▪ Build capacity among educational stakeholders.	▪ Conduct outreach activities with stakeholders to assist them in their role in supporting improved student learning such as: ✓ Presentations and Regional Forums to parent groups, PICs and Associations ✓ Presentations to school and board staff on using data to improve student learning and to enhance deeper understanding of EQAO assessments and resources.
		▪ By March 31, 2016, request that a course in assessment be mandatory within the new two year B. Ed. program and that EQAO facilitate the delivery of the course ▪ Be the primary deliverer of a Schedule C additional qualification course on assessment through a current provider.
	▪ Build capacity in schools to interpret and use EQAO data to inform school improvement planning and student achievement and to assist them in fulfilling their accountability mandate.	▪ Conduct outreach activities for principals and school teams such as: ✓ Regional learning forums ✓ Regional workshops ✓ Provide workshops for elementary and secondary principals and teacher-leaders in using the online site for EQAO reports in support of student achievement. ✓ A Learning Forum, including the sharing of successful strategies, for the schools that are recipients of the 2015 Dr. Bette Stephenson Recognition of Achievement on the day following the event. ✓ Collection of Schools on The Journey of Learning (Success stories) ✓ Individual school visits and presentations ✓ Gather information from school teams to support EQAO research projects, as required. ✓ Continue a focus on Mathematics through learning forums for school teams.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2015–2018 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*
		▪ Identify and offer support in using EQAO data and resources to schools that continue to experience significant challenges in meeting the provincial achievement standards. ▪ Continue the collaborative coaching initiative.
3.2 Ensure communication informs educational stakeholders, the public and the media effectively.	▪ Develop public release plans that ensure local and provincial coverage, and respond to significant issues raised constructively.	▪ For each public release, conduct a media campaign that earns high reach across languages and regions, achieves an 85% quality score for key message pick-up, and drives discussion among stakeholders.
		▪ Monitor EQAO and education related issues in the media daily and respond constructively to significant issues raised through media coverage.
		▪ Leverage modern communication methods (i.e. infographics, videos, other rich media) when communicating with the public.
		▪ Profile schools on a journey of learning that highlight the use of EQAO data and evidence to develop strategies for improving student achievement. Present the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement to the schools.
	▪ Effectively maintain stakeholder engagement and relationships through social media	▪ Maintain a corporate Facebook page and Twitter feed, LinkedIn company page and continue leveraging Vimeo and YouTube channels ▪ Develop and implement a schedule of annual corporate postings ▪ Engage in authentic conversations with stakeholders through these channels ▪ Regularly monitor and respond to issues raised on third party social media channels ▪ Monitor and evaluate social media strategy and policy for EQAO.
3.3 Leverage educator involvement in EQAO activities so it is viewed as positive and valuable professional development.	▪ Provide professional development opportunities that educators find positive and valuable.	▪ 85% of educators report finding scoring is a valuable professional development experience.

PRIORITY 4: VALUABLE RESEARCH DATA

A commitment to demonstrate that all practices of the agency are grounded in research-based knowledge.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2015–2018 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*
4.1 Conduct research that investigates factors that influence student achievement and education quality, and into how the resulting data can inform the agency's work.	▪ Conduct research projects that contribute to improvement planning and/or enhancement of EQAO's large-scale assessment program.	▪ Complete the following research projects: 1. Examine the relationships between report card marks and achievement on the EQAO assessments. 2. Indentify schools with high achievement levels for students in the applied courses. ▪ Conduct the following new research projects: 1. Review the definition of the literacy construct for the OSSLT and TPCL. 2. Identify research projects to provide additional validity evidence for the EQAO assessments. 3. Examine the impact of full-day kindergarten on Grade 3 EQAO assessments results. 4. Conduct research related to Modernizing Assessment Operations (MAO): ✓ Literature reviews related to computer-based assessment, including impacts of socio-economic status, keyboarding skills, students with special education needs and English-language learners ✓ Comparability of paper-and-pencil versus computer-based assessment: study of effects due to mode for paper test vs online test (OSSLT/TPCL February 2015) ✓ Comparability of "old" and "new" answer booklet formats (all assessment, 2015)
4.2 Showcase how research-based knowledge informs the agency's practices.	▪ Communicate research findings to our stakeholders to assist in education improvement.	▪ Submit EQAO research paper(s) for publication in educational research journals. ▪ Make presentations at the 2015 OAME conference. ▪ Identify strategies that assist parents understand EQAO results for school improvement planning.
4.3 Provide interpretations of student achievement results based on research and analysis as part of public releases or in addition to public releases.	▪ Publish reports or additional information specifically related to research findings that connect to student achievement.	▪ Publish a research bulletin on effective practices for improving the achievement of students in applied courses.

PRIORITY 5: EFFECTIVE BUSINESS PRACTICES

Strategically aligned business practices that enhance the agency's ability to focus on and deliver key priorities and commitments.

GOALS	OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES	2015–2018 PERFORMANCE MEASURES
5.1 Uphold an effective governance framework that ensures accountability and efficient agency operations.	▪ Develop and implement governance policies, frameworks and operational protocols.	▪ Ensure that the agency's 2016-2017 Business plan is presented to the Minister by December 31, 2015, as per the Agency, Establishment and Accountability Directive.
		▪ Deliver the agency's Annual Report by July 31, as directed by the Memorandum of Understanding and the Agency Establishment and Accountability Directive.
		▪ Finalize the strategic planning initiative to set out the priorities of the agency for the next business cycle by June 30, 2015
		▪ Continue to implement the Internal Operational Governance Framework pertaining to agency and board activities and responsibilities including: ✓ Risk Management Framework ✓ Business Continuity Framework
5.2 Ensure effective and efficient fiscal and business management processes.	▪ Maintain rigorous management practices and operate consistently with MBC directives and relevant federal and provincial legislation, including the EQAO *Act*.	▪ Ensure fiscal accountability by following rigorous financial practices and internal controls that are substantiated through audit reports.
		▪ Establish and meet timelines within the procurement plan and contract award log to: comply with government procurement requirements; to ensure that procurement processes are fair, open, and transparent; and to ensure that the agency's business continues efficiently and effectively.
	▪ Monitor business processes to improve fiscal and operational management.	▪ Review at least 8 operational protocols and/or procedures, based on an established schedule, to confirm they reflect effective and efficient business processes.
5.3 Build a supportive organizational culture that acknowledges staff achievement and benefits employees in their professional growth.	▪ Develop HR programs and approaches to support talent management and staff development.	▪ Offer a Professional Learning Program to staff members to promote a broad understanding of all EQAO practices.
	▪ Continuously value and regularly recognize the work and dedication of EQAO staff.	▪ Continue to recognize staff contributions regularly throughout the year and during quarterly all-staff and branch meetings.
	▪ Develop HR programs and business practices to build a supportive organizational culture.	▪ Continue to ensure that the work of the HR unit aligns with the HR Commitments (formally HR Plan).
		▪ Continue to explore and implement appropriate flexible work options for staff.
5.4 Leverage technology to enhance EQAO operations and	▪ Identify and implement new technologies to collect and report complex data and translate them into information and	▪ Provide school-board staff with interactive access to results and online training in the use of the resource and the effective use of data for school improvement planning.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2015–2018 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*
delivery of programs both internally and externally.	subsequently into knowledge that informs decision-making.	▪ Provide enhancements to EQAO Reporting for principals.
	▪ Utilize technology to continuously improve the agency's efficiency and effectiveness.	▪ By March 31, 2016, launch EQAO's new Web site using SharePoint. Develop and deliver on a plan for continuous site enhancements based on user analytics and stakeholder feedback.
		▪ Modernizing Assessment Operations: ✓ Implement image-based, online scoring for all assessments in 2015-2016 ✓ Implement electronic item bank, including item authoring and test form construction work flows, in 2015-2016 ✓ Administer Voluntary Online OSSLT/TPCL available to all secondary schools in November 2015. ✓ Administer online OSSLT/TPCL in March 2016 available to all schools. ✓ Beginning in the 2016-17 school year, conduct research, field testing, and practice tests of the Grade 9 assessment of mathematics to inform implementation. ✓ Administration of Grade 9 online assessments are planned for the 2017-18 school year

Resources Needed to Meet Goals and Objectives

The nature of the work involved in delivering Ontario's only large-scale assessment program creates a unique and challenging environment for human resources planning and management. EQAO will continue to rely on staff and Ontario educators to deliver its mandate. In establishing the agency, it was anticipated that its programs would be delivered through a combination of permanent staff, short-term contracts and secondments. As such, in addition to providing for a full-time staff appointed under the *Public Service of Ontario Act*, the *EQAO Act* gives the office authority to engage additional professional, technical or other assistance, as required to develop, administer, and report on its assessments. EQAO draws on specialized expertise from a number of professional and technical individuals in assessment, psychometrics and curriculum, including seconding educators from schools and boards across the province. In addition, EQAO engages approximately 2000 Ontario educators annually to help develop and score its tests and over 25 140 to administer them. Annually, this comprises approximately 11% of the 238 000 members in good standing of the Ontario College of Teachers.

EQAO also engages scholars-in-residence and established a panel of professional experts in large-scale assessment and psychometrics who are from other jurisdictions in Canada and the United States. In addition, the agency has established independent committees comprising Ontario educators to provide advice and support in all phases of its assessment program.

EQAO's School Support and Outreach team will continue to hold regional workshops and dialogue forums to assist school teams and principals in using data and other evidence for school improvement planning.

To meet the agency's mandate and maintain its "best of class" assessment program in the year ahead, the agency will establish a permanent staff complement at the assigned cap of 97 full-time positions and will continue to engage professional and technical staff, such as secondees and assessment and psychometric experts, as required to support its work. All resources will be managed within the agency's annual allocation.

For 2015-2016, the agency's expenditures and capital costs are outlined in the projected budget on the following page. Relative to the annual public education investment of approximately $21B, EQAO's assessment program costs approximately $17 per student and represents significant value for money. This modest cost allows for the collection, scoring and reporting of valuable student achievement data that are used by students, parents, teachers, schools, school boards and the province to track and develop evidence- based plans to improve student achievement across the system.

OPERATING EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET REQUIREMENTS – 2015-2018

HISTORIC EXPENDITURES AND PROJECTED BUDGET ($M)

The proposed budget incorporates projected costs associated with the Agency's ongoing operations and the annual commitments identified in this plan.

	2010-2011 Actual	2011-2012 Actual	2012-2013 Actual	2013-2014 Actual	2014-2015 Projected	2015-2016 Projected	2016-2017 Projected	2017-2018 Projected
Program Area								
Grade 3 & 6 (Reading, Writing & Mathematics)	13.99	14.90	12.33	13.40	13.10	13.43	13.81	13.46
Grade 9 (Mathematics)	6.29	5.91	6.01	5.82	6.19	6.94	7.13	7.04
Ontario Secondary School Literary Test	9.56	9.44	8.85	10.37	11.02	10.30	7.52	7.96
Operating	2.27	1.78	1.58	2.62	2.70	2.84	2.82	2.82
Total EQAO Program Operating Expenses	**32.11**	**32.03**	**28.77**	**32.21**	**33.01**	**33.51**	**31.28**	**31.28**
National/International Program (funded separately by Ministry)	0.76	0.82	0.60	0.79	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85
Total Expenses Including National/International	**32.87**	**32.85**	**29.37**	**33.00**	**33.86**	**34.36**	**32.13**	**32.13**
Ministry Allocation for EQAO Operating Expenses	32.08	32.08	31.28	31.28	31.28	31.28	31.28	31.28
National/International program Funded Separately	0.76	0.82	0.60	0.79	0.85	0.85	0.85	0.85
Funding from Internally Restricted Board Fund	-	-	-	-	1.73	2.23	-	-
Total Funding	**32.84**	**32.90**	**31.88**	**32.07**	**33.86**	**34.36**	**32.13**	**32.13**
Capital Assets	0.15	0.31	0.06	0.90	0.48	0.35	0.35	0.50
Capital Assets from Internally Restricted Board Fund - (Modernizing Assessment Operations)	-	-	-	-	2.49	-	-	-

NOTES/ASSUMPTIONS

Payroll assumptions are based on ratified collective agreements and the same assumptions apply to future years.

National/International costs are dependent on Ministry decisions regarding Ontario's participation in these assessments and are funded separately based on these decisions.

Communications Plan

The agency's Strategic Framework identifies five strategic priorities, which seek to strengthen the agency's role as an important source of information regarding student achievement in Ontario. This framework extends EQAO's programs and services to enhance access to information on student learning by key stakeholders and their interpretation and use of it. The priority for EQAO communications is therefore to support these goals by developing or contributing to the strategies and tactics used to engage and inform stakeholders about EQAO's work, and using assessment reporting and analyses of the data to bring attention to system strengths and areas requiring further attention and improvement.

Communications initiatives will be guided by the following strategy statement: *"Actively share relevant, impartial and credible evidence of student learning directly with each stakeholder community, explaining what it means and how it can be used."*

Communications to Support the Quality and Integrity of Ontario's Large-scale Full-census Assessment Programs

The agency will continue to review, enhance and deliver the resources it makes available to the public, educators and school administrators to ensure clear and consistent administration of the assessments. This includes the timely provision of assessment administration-related materials, maintaining a high quality information service to the public and the school system through the agency's Information Centre and the quality and availability of meaningful reports and resources available on its Web site. A large component of the work will focus on engaging and keeping all stakeholders informed of EQAO's move to online assessments at each stage of the process.

Communications to Support Student Progress

In order to sustain the agency's efforts to report data and evidence that can benefit educator instruction and student achievement, Communications will continue delivering innovative and rich media products for parents, educators and the public, such as videos, infographics and multi-media presentations. We will continue focusing relevant messages to parents and educators in support of student progress and meaningfully engage with all stakeholders through social media.

Building Capacity for the Use of Data

Communications will support the agency's efforts to build capacity for the use of data through service to educators, parents, the government and the public. EQAO will present the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement to some 20 schools, profiling how school communities are successfully using EQAO data and other evidence to develop strategies for improving student achievement, with a particular emphasis on successful math instruction strategies. We will continue enhancing and delivering resources so that partners in the education system better understand how to use EQAO results to support students. An ongoing focus will be on the creation of wide-reaching and compelling public releases, which both acknowledge the education system's achievements while also drawing attention to areas still requiring attention.

Showcasing EQAO Research

EQAO is committed to conducting research to develop the right instruments and best practices to keep the agency at the forefront of large-scale assessment and to ensure that EQAO data are used to improve student learning. In this regard, Communications will showcase research findings to its stakeholders in order to contribute to the public discourse on education quality and accountability and assist in education improvement. Continued attention will be given to providing interpretations of research findings and drawing increased public and parent attention to EQAO's research. Advisories, promotional notices and articles will be distributed to stakeholders.

Supporting Effective Business Practices

Communications will ensure effective and efficient fiscal and business management processes in its operations, including following established procurement processes when sourcing or renewing contracts with third-party service providers. To support the agency's efforts to move to a more environmentally friendly workplace, communications will continue to look for opportunities to deliver information electronically, rather than in print, when appropriate. Communications will partner with and contribute to the implementation of the corporate business I&IT strategy and will continue to lead the improvements to its Web site.

Risk Assessment and Management

Risk assessment and management provides reasonable assurance that all the key risks are identified and that processes are in place to mitigate and to maintain the confidence of internal and external stakeholders of the organization. An extensive risk management framework has been developed to document the agency's risk areas and provide risk response strategies. Nine risk categories are identified in the framework.

Each risk category has been reviewed to identify the likelihood of occurrence and the impact that each risk might have on the agency. It was determined that although the likelihood of occurrence of these risk categories was low, there are varying levels of impact.

A detailed risk mitigation strategy has been documented within the framework for each risk category. Existing governance policies, operational protocols, annual technical reports, annual scoring plans, and annual administration guidelines have been referenced as supporting documents and contain detailed procedures, guiding principles and key steps that EQAO takes to mitigate any possible risk to the agency.

EQAO systematically reviews its Risk Management Framework each year, to determine if there are new risks, to re-evaluate the existing risk categories, and to explore whether there are any additional potential responses. This Framework is revised each year during the agency's annual Audit.

ID	Risk Categories	Strategic Priority	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Response
			Large-Scale Assessment			
1	Large-Scale Assessment	1	Risks related to the elements of the large-scale assessment cycle including assessment development, administration, scoring.	L/M	H	• Continue to engage educators in all aspects of the assessment program. • Items are reviewed by the Assessment Advisory Committee and the Sensitivity Committee to ensure the quality of items used in the assessment. • Contract independent quality assurance monitors to observe the administration of each assessment in five percent of schools to ensure that the schools are following guidelines. • Ensure there is a back up test for each assessment.
			Risks related to implementing the new future-state business model that leverages technology in administration of the EQAO assessment program.	L	M	• EQAO has a Business Plan and an I&IT Strategic Plan that articulates its strategic and operational objectives, including the use of information and information technology (I&IT) in meeting those objectives. • Online assessments were pilot tested before full implementation and are continuously monitored for successful achievement of business objectives. • Elements of the pilots that are unsuccessful required revisions to the solution model and implementation plan. • If the OSSLT online fails, the paper tests will be onsite.
2	Data Integrity	1	Risks that may compromise the reliability and credibility of the data.	M	H	• The technical quality and processes for each assessment are documented and adhered to for each Assessment. • Publication of the annual technical report. • The agency confers with experts (e.g., EQAO psychometricians and scholars-in-residence) who advise on scoring results. • Ensure the accuracy of the psychometric analysis of each assessment through a replication process.

ID	Risk Categories	Strategic Priority	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Response
						▪ Booklets are printed in a secure card-access printing room. ▪ Student packages are bundled by class and assigned a bundle barcode. ▪ The agency applies rigorous scoring procedures to ensure the reliability of test results. Scorers are trained to score test in a consistent manner using rubrics, samples of students work and practice of training papers.
			Governance and Accountability			
3	Governance Framework/ Accountability	5	Governance framework, which articulates accountabilities, such as roles and responsibilities, board-CEO linkages, authorities and delegations, is either inadequate or is not adhered to by board and/or staff of the agency	M	L	▪ Maintain a comprehensive governance framework that is based on legislative requirements and best practices in board policy governance ▪ Maintain solid business practices as documented in governance frameworks, policies, protocols and procedures. ▪ EQAO Board Chair, as Ethics Officer, ensures board follows to Conflict of Interest policies and procedures.
4	Financial Controls	5	Risks to the agency's financial resources.	L	H	▪ Undergo annual external and internal audit processes. ▪ Regularly review and update the procurement and financial protocols to ensure that they align with Ontario government directives. ▪ Utilize the annual procurement plan to ensure compliance with tendering and procurement practices and proper delegation. ▪ Ongoing dialogue with government to anticipate funding changes. ▪ Rigorously monitor costs /manage contracts.
5	Fraud	5	Risks relating to improper conduct by staff, board members or other stakeholders with connections to the agency and/or its operations.	L	M	▪ Continue to monitor the security of physical assets, access to data and financial instruments. ▪ Continue to maintain our governance structure that including the appropriate lines of authority, proper authorization of transactions and major decisions.
6	Reporting Accountability	1	Not reporting to the OPS, as required by legislation, the MOU and relevant OPS directives	L	M	▪ Established an internal governance framework that is designed to monitor all reporting and revision requirements to ensure that key documents are maintained and reported in a timely manner. ▪ Regular review by all parties particularly at time of transition/change of key personnel (Chair, Minister and CEO). MOU is updated, approved and presented to the Ministry as per the AEAD and the MOU Guide. ▪ Each fall the agency submits its financial reports to the Ministry of Education for approval. These reports align with the agency's business plan and annual report.

ID	Risk Categories	Strategic Priority	Risk Description	Likeli-hood	Impact	Risk Response
			Workforce			
7	Human Resources	5	The need to maintain a full complement of qualified staff to support delivery of its large scale assessment programs.	**L**	**M**	▪ Offer adequate opportunities for professional development for all staff to ensure that there is an adequate complement of staff that is able to successfully carry out the work of the Agency. ▪ Continue to regularly update the Human Resource strategic plan to ensure it has adequate focus on recruitment, retention and succession planning. ▪ Annual performance planning process is maintained ▪ Ensure that EQAO has a well trained project team dedicated to Modernizing Assessment Operations in order to ensure that deliverables are met in a timely manner.
			When undertaking a large business model shift, there are risks that the current business model may be neglected.	**L/M**	H	▪ Senior management carefully monitors its staff through individual and team meetings to ensure that the present business operations are completed with rigor. ▪ The quarterly performance measures, which are presented to the Board of Directors, keep all staff accountable to their responsibilities.
			Information and Information Technology			
8	Technological	5	Risk of business/service downtime as a result of technological failures.	**M**	H	▪ A duplicate system containing all student results is kept as a backup in case of system failure. ▪ Develop Information Technology Strategy to optimize use of automation to maintain program delivery.
		5	Risk of technical issues related to implementation of online assessments for the OSSLT/TPCL	**M**	**M**	▪ A voluntary online administration of the OSSLT/TPCL will be available for schools in November. In the event of technical issues, students will be able to participate in the regularly scheduled OSSLT/TPCL in March 2016 for which online and paper versions will be available (students writing online will have paper back-up available at their school).
9	Information Security and Privacy	5	Issues arising from handling sensitive and personal information. Major privacy breach.	**L**	**M**	▪ Agency has a privacy program that includes protocols, procedures, and training for staff to fortify the secure handing of personal and sensitive information by agency employees. ▪ All data related to the MAO initiative will be stored on servers in Canada.
			Strategic			
10	Business and Strategic Planning	5	Lack of strategic or business planning to set out the agency's strategic priorities.	**L**	**M**	▪ At the end of the business planning cycle, the Board of Directors begin planning for the upcoming business cycle of the agency. ▪ Each year the agency develops a 3-year rolling business plan that is reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors and Chair and submitted to the Minister of Education for approval.
11	Business Continuity	5	Manage sudden changes to the agency's business, while minimizing any disruption to the agency's operation.	**L**	**L**	▪ Maintain a business continuity plan for the agency's operations ▪ The agency holds all third party vendors accountable for their work through constant reviews and evaluations of their performance.

ID	Risk Categories	Strategic Priority	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Response
12	Stakeholders and Reputation	2, 3	Lack of co-operation and support of stakeholders, particularly among educators to develop and administer the assessments effectively. Lack of understanding of role of agency and value of data.	L	M	▪ The agency maintains and updated communications plan that includes strategies to address negative media reporting of student achievement data, building the capacity of the media (education reporters) to understand the benefit of EQAO data to assist educators, parents and researchers. ▪ Build the capacity of stakeholders through ongoing outreach delivered by the agency on the use of data for improvement planning and Modernizing Assessment Operations. Ensure the School Support and Outreach team monitors the responses of educators regarding service provision. ▪ Continue to provide reports to boards and schools in a timely manner that are helpful and continue to offer capacity-building sessions (e.g., school visits, symposia, workshops) to develop understandings about how to use data. ▪ Daily media monitoring and responding to significant issues, as appropriate.
			Reputational risk related to major issues with implementing the online assessments in secondary schools	M	M	▪ Updated issues management and response plan related to administering online assessments. ▪ Timely and transparent activities related to identifying causes of issues during November online administration of OSSLT/TPCL and mitigation plan in place for the March 2016 administration.
Modernizing Assessment Operations – Online Testing						
13	Security breach	5	Risk that the test content is compromised.	L	H	▪ Educate EQAO staff, vendors, school boards and school personnel on security protocols, best practices and the importance of test security. Determine the scope, reach and impact of the breach. ▪ Suspend testing if necessary. Use back-up forms as required when testing resumes.
14	Proctor passwords compromised at the school	5	Risk that unauthorized users can access the proctor website.	M	H	▪ Educate EQAO staff and school personnel on security protocols and best practices. ▪ Upon notification, deactivate the compromised password and issue new credentials.
15	Software bug that adversely affects the testing environment	5	Risk that the test interface or a particular item does not function as intended (display problem, slow response time).	L	M	▪ Develop and execute comprehensive test plan, including regression tests. ▪ Use practice testing as a final system check Online testing team is on call during the testing window to address anomalies that may arise during testing. ▪ Call centre is available to provide support.
16	System down (local ISP problem, hosting issue)	5	Risk that the test cannot be completed during the scheduled time.	M	H	▪ Technical readiness assessment, technical coordinator training, use of redundant online-testing hosting sites. ▪ Resume testing when connectivity issue is resolved or reschedule testing for another day.

ID	Risk Categories	Strategic Priority	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Response
17	Field readiness for specific aspects of online assessment	5	Students not prepared to undertake the online assessments in mathematics (e.g. using online rulers, protractors, etc, during the assessment)	L/M	H	▪ Continuously be aware of the feedback from the field throughout the pilot testing phase ▪ Adjust timelines for full administration if the field isn't sufficiently prepared to undertake the assessment online, including have back-up test administration systems in place ▪ Ensure sufficient time and opportunities are provided to practice and become familiar with all online tools for mathematics
18	School level emergency, such as a power outage	5	Issues arising at the school, causing testing to be interrupted or must be postponed.	L	M	▪ Collaborate with school boards to document approved procedures and protocols in the event of a school level emergency. ▪ Resume testing when connectivity issue is resolved or reschedule testing for another day.
19	Inclement weather	5	Issues causing testing to be delayed	M	M	▪ Collaborate with the school boards and gather requirements for emergency event implementation plan. ▪ Work with school boards and to adjust project plan to minimize the impact on making results available to schools & boards.
			Modernizing Assessment Operations – Online Scoring			
20	Inability to recruit scorers	5	Inability to recruit appropriate number of scorers	L	L	▪ Communicate with, and recruit scorers early (60-90 days prior to scoring) and provide clear technical readiness information and practice sessions. ▪ Increased effort in recruitment of scorers with the appropriate technical capacity.
21	Inclement weather	5	Issues relating to return of materials, and scanning materials caused by inclement weather	L/M	M	▪ Monitor weather conditions across the province during test windows and communicate with schools/school boards that could be impacted by inclement weather. ▪ Collaborate with vendors in creation of an inclement weather action plan.
22	Late Return of Test Materials	5	Delays to the return of materials, and subsequently scanning	M	L	▪ Communicate appropriate return deadlines and establish pre-arranged pick-ups from schools based on the assessment window(s).
23	Large-scale Security Breach	5	Items are exposed to unauthorized individuals	L/M	M	▪ Establish clear terms and conditions for scorers and communicate security expectations and obligations during training.
24	Individual remote scorers' computer compatibility	5	Scoring, Reporting Impact	M	M	▪ Distribute system readiness validation site and minimal system requirements 60-90 days prior to scoring
25	Online scoring system capacity overload	5	Risks to overloading the system when scoring and reporting	L/M	M/H	▪ Execute load test on production servers at 150% of projected user count.
26	Incorrect item online-testing project setup	5	Risks related to incorrect items when scoring and reporting	L/M	H	▪ Perform walkthrough of scorable items with scoring staff 10 days before the start of scoring to ensure scoring mapping and routing is confirmed

ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2014–2015

The following 5 strategic priorities and associated goals, objectives and measures have been established to guide the agency's work.

PRIORITY 1: "BEST OF CLASS" ASSESSMENTS

A commitment to provide credible evidence of student learning based on The Ontario Curriculum.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*	*ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE*
1.1 Maintain the quality and integrity of Ontario's large-scale full-census assessment programs.	▪ Incorporate leading edge *assessment practices* gained through research on large-scale assessment (e.g. jurisdictional reviews, Psychometric Expert Panel, Scholars in Residence) or through work with external experts.	▪ Continue enhancements to assessment practices including: ✓ Apply target Test Information Functions in the construction of tests ✓ Maintain equating process as verified by research findings	▪ Held Psychometric Expert Panel meeting, to consult on assessment issues, May 2014. Topics included: ✓ Short writing conventions rubrics ✓ OSSLT/TPCL item classification study ✓ Modernizing assessment operations ✓ Evidence of validity in EQAO assessments ✓ Reporting of sub-scores ✓ Developments in assessment nationally and internationally ▪ Conducted successful scoring of Primary/Junior and Grade 9 assessments. ▪ Initiated 2015 form construction with reference to target test information functions, classical test theory, item response theory and pedagogy for each of the assessment programs. ▪ Ongoing adherence to advice from Scholar in Residence to ensure psychometric and research requirements for transition to online scoring and online test administration
	▪ Develop and obtain high-quality curriculum-based assessment materials and items through rigorous development, field test and committee review processes.	▪ 100% of the items match the expectations of the *Ontario curriculum.*	▪ 100% of test items used on the 2014 assessments matched the expectations of *The Ontario Curriculum.*
	▪ Ensure that proper administration guidelines and systematic approaches	▪ Assign Quality Assurance monitors to visit a random sample of schools that represents all school boards in the province over a three-year period.	▪ Quality assurance (Q/A) monitors observed test administration in a total of 285 schools as follows: ✓ -Primary/Junior: 220 (180 English and 40 French) ✓ -Grade 9: 30 (20 English and 10 French)

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*	*ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE*
	are followed to ensure the quality and integrity of data.		✓-OSSLT/TPCL: 35 (25 English and 10 French) ▪ Reports received to date, related to the administration of the OSSLT/TPCL, indicate that in the schools visited, the assessments were administered in accordance with EQAO's policies and procedures. ▪ Overall, according to the quality assurance school monitors, the tests for all assessment programs were administered in accordance with EQAO policies and procedures. In the few instances where test administration irregularities were noted, they did not compromise the integrity of test results.
		▪ After scoring, implement a system of targeted bin checks in which schools have been identified, in the past or currently, with issues through sources such as collusion analyses, alleged test administration irregularities, large increases in schools' results, issues envelopes and range finding.	▪ In the Primary and Junior Assessments, a total of 252 schools' test materials (195 English and 57 French) were selected for review. ▪ In Grade 9, a total of 113 schools' test materials (83 English and 30 French) were selected for review. ▪ In OSSLT/TPCL, a total of 112 schools' test materials (87 English and 25 French) were selected for review. ▪ No administration irregularities were detected from these reviews. ▪ Document and implement reporting decisions related to collusion analysis and administration issues. ▪ Implemented new tracking application to document Issues Envelopes received for all assessments.
		▪ 100% of educators indicate that administration guidelines are clear and easy to understand.	▪ Virtually all educators indicate that administration guidelines are clear and easy to understand as follows: ▪ Primary and Junior (English) 91%; (French) 100% ▪ Grade 9 (English) 100%; (French) 100% ▪ OSSLT/TPCL (English) 91%; (French) 100%
		▪ 80% of educators surveyed rate the responses received through the call centre as useful or very useful.	▪ Primary and Junior (English) 90%; (French) 77% ▪ Grade 9 (English) 50%; (French) 100% ▪ OSSLT/TPCL (English) most (no percentage provided) (French) 83%
	▪ Ensure that systematic scoring processes are in place to ensure scoring accuracy to maintain the agency as a leader in these processes at	▪ 100% of scorers receive training and must pass a qualifying test before being allowed to score.	▪ 100% of scorers in all assessment programs received training and had to pass a qualifying test before being allowed to score student work.
		▪ 100% of scorers not meeting accuracy requirements for exact plus adjacent agreement on the 10 daily validity papers are either retrained or released.	▪ 100% of scorers not meeting accuracy requirements for exact plus adjacent agreement on the 10 daily validity papers were either retrained or released.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*	*ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE*
	or above best of class standards.	▪ Monitor scoring validity[3] to ensure consistency among scorers to maintain high levels of accuracy: ✓ 75% exact agreement on a 3 point rubric ✓ 70% on a 4 point rubric; 65% on 5 point rubric; 60% on 6 point rubric ✓ 95%exact plus adjacent agreement on all rubrics.	▪ Across all assessments, only three items were below the target metric for scoring validity (accuracy) of 95% exact plus adjacent agreement: one Grade 3 (English) reading item, one Grade 9 mathematics (English) Academic item, and one OSSLT (English) short writing item.
	▪ Publish an annual technical report on the validity, reliability and overall technical quality of all assessments to demonstrate the stature of the agency's work.	▪ For March 2015, publish the 2014 Technical Report that confirms the overall technical quality of the assessments through reporting on the following: ✓ test reliability will be higher than 0.75 for all assessments ✓ classification consistency and accuracy will be above 0.85 for all assessments ✓ Scorer agreement on individual test items will be 95% exact plus adjacent ✓ item statistics: item difficulty will be in the range of 0.25 to 0.95 and point biserial correlations will be at or above 0.20 for all items ✓ a description of Item Response Theory (IRT) calibration and equating ✓ Differential Item Functioning (DIF) statistics for all items.	▪ 2014 English and French Technical report are currently being finalized.
	▪ Begin implementing key components of the OSSLT/TPCL computer based testing project.	▪ By March 2015, complete pilot testing of items developed in 2012-2013.	▪ 116 English-language and 202 French-language reading selections have been accepted. ▪ 643 English-language and 1729 French-language reading and writing test items have been developed.
		▪ By March 2015, complete the pilot test of the computer based testing system.	▪ Report will be provided in Q4.

[3] The validity statistic is a measure of scorers' accuracy of scoring as compared to that of expert scorers.

GOALS	OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES	2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES	ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE
1.2 Report to the government, educators, parents and the public in a manner that demonstrates the quality and accountability of Ontario's education system.	▪ Present analytical information in a format that will enable stakeholders to interpret and use the reports and increase accountability.	▪ Public release of provincial results for each annual assessment will occur within12 weeks of administration for Primary/Junior, Grade 9 Mathematics and the OSSLT/TPCL.	▪ Highlights of provincial results were publicly reported on August 27. School and board level results were publicly reported on September 17 for elementary schools and on September 24 for secondary schools.
		▪ Publish EQAO's annual Elementary and Secondary School provincial reports.	▪ On September 17 EQAO delivered the publicly-posted elementary and secondary provincial reports, in addition to publishing results online in its EQAO Reporting Web application.
		▪ 85% of educators surveyed through the QA monitor survey are satisfied with the reports posted on EQAO website.	▪ Each report/document posted on the EQAO Web site is rated individually. Overall, more than 85% of educators surveyed through the QA monitor survey were satisfied with the reports.
		▪ Increase the public's awareness and appreciation of EQAO's role through public release of assessment results as well as analytical and interpretive reports.	▪ Public friendly infographics were created and published to report on the results of the provincial assessments and PCAP. Each release was supported by a full media and public information campaign.
1.3 As per Ministry's mandate, Co-ordinate Ontario's participation in national and international assessment projects.	▪ Administer national and international assessments to samples of students to enable reporting overall results for Ontario.	▪ Prepare for the administration of the field test for TIMSS 2015.	▪ In Q1 the TIMSS 2015 field test (Grades 4 and 8), involving a combined total of approximately 60 schools and 2,000 students, was successfully conducted. ▪ In Q2, EQAO is preparing for TIMSS 2015 administration. Liaised with selected schools and associated boards. School boards are submitting student, class, teacher and school-level data by the October 28 deadline.
		▪ Prepare for the administration of the field test for PISA 2015	▪ The PISA 2015 field test (15-year-old students), involving a total of approximately 28 schools and 2,000 students, was successfully conducted in the spring 2014.
		▪ Release the results for the PCAP 2013.	▪ The PCAP 2013 results were released on October 2014 including the publication of an Ontario report, an infographic and a full media and stakeholder information campaign
		▪ Release the results for the ICILS 2013.	▪ The ICILS 2013 results was released in November 2014.

PRIORITY 2: SUPPORTING STUDENT PROGRESS

A commitment to be the integrator of a broad range of evidence that identifies areas where interventions can be made to ensure that all students have the opportunity to reach their highest possible level of achievement.

GOALS	OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES	2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES	ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE
2.1 Integrate and report on evidence a broad range of evidence to assist educators and board trustees to better interpret results and facilitate progress.	▪ Provide longitudinal data as a useful resource for educators.	▪ Continue to incorporate longitudinal data into school, board, and provincial reports, and provide interpretive analysis and discussion in the provincial reports	▪ Longitudinal data was incorporated into school, board and provincial reports, and provided interpretive analysis and discussion in the provincial reports.
		▪ Continue to report longitudinal student achievement results on Individual Student Reports (ISRs), and where applicable, data files for school boards for Grade 3 to Grade 6 to Grade 9 and to the OSSLT/TPCL.	▪ Provided student's prior EQAO assessment results on primary, junior and Grade 9 ISRs released in September. ▪ Provided PJ reading, writing and mathematics result to data files for download for Grade 9.
	▪ Report on the first full-day kindergarten cohort in a meaningful manner	▪ Provide an analysis and report on the student achievement results of the first full day kindergarten students, who wrote the EQAO primary division assessment.	▪ In process of developing a responsible study design to review and analyze the outcomes of students who participated in the initial launch of the FDK program.
	▪ Report data and evidence that can benefit educator instruction and student achievement.	▪ Provide school-board staff with an interactive reporting Web application on the secure Web site. Provide enhancements to the reporting application for principals.	▪ Reports that were previously available in PDF format on the secure site are now available through EQAO Reporting Web application (e.g., detailed school/board results). ▪ Enhancement added to EQAO reporting include o "Summary by Groups of Items" report shows the number of items by skill, strand or expectation. o "Item Averages by Groups of Items" report shows the average score for each item and will facilitate the examination of the performance of particular groups of students on particular items. o "Item Information Report (IIR): Student Roster" lists all students, the responses they selected for multiple-choice items and the score code they received for open-response items.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*	*ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE*
			○ "Detailed Item Information Report" shows the distribution of student answers across response options and/or score codes, as well as the average score for each item at the school, board and provincial levels. ○ For each item, there is more information about the link with curriculum expectations ▪ Discontinued "Average Scores Report" for the elementary school assessments and "Profile of Strengths and Areas for Improvement" report for the secondary school assessments. Consultation with Psychometric Expert Panel addressed concern about the risk of misinterpretation of provincial assessment results at the sub scale level and potential emphasis being placed on these results for diagnostic or remedial decision-making.
		▪ Continue to provide achievement results from previous assessments (Grade 3 and 6) on Individual Student Reports for Grade 9 and the OSSLT/TPCL.	▪ Provided student's prior EQAO assessment results on primary, junior and Grade 9 ISRs released in September
	▪ Incorporate 21st Century skills into provincial reporting.	▪ Provide an analysis of 21st Century Skills in relation to EQAO results and incorporate into 2014 elementary and secondary Provincial Reports.	▪ Information on Ontario students' acquisition of global competencies (21st century skills) was included in the 2014 elementary and secondary provincial reports.
2.2 Support student learning by providing classroom teachers with additional resources.	▪ Provide teachers with curriculum based classroom support.	▪ Provide math assessment resources for the beginning for Grade 6 before March 31, 2015: ✓ Provide information on schools with high achievement for students in applied courses in mathematics, English and Français.	▪ This project has been delayed, pending implementation of the Modernizing Assessment Operations initiative.
2.3 Ensure that parents and students are able to use data and other evidence	▪ Provide resources and effective strategies to support student progress.	▪ Review, implement, and report on Year Five tactics of the five-year parent engagement strategy.	▪ 8 evening parent presentations with 725 participants were conducted ▪ 1 Parent Forum in the north was held with 28 participants

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*	*ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE*
to maximize student achievement.		▪ Provide achievement results from previous assessments (Grade 3 and 6) on Individual Student Reports for Grade 9 and the OSSLT/TPCL.	▪ Highlights of provincial results were publicly reported on August 27. School and board level results were publicly reported on September 17 for elementary schools and on September 24 for secondary schools.
		▪ Distribute the elementary school and secondary school parents' guides to schools for all students who will be writing EQAO tests in the upcoming year. ▪ Make these guides available on-line in multiple languages.	▪ Elementary and secondary school parent guides were updated this year and distributed to all schools. ▪ The guides are available on line in multiple languages.

PRIORITY 3: BUILDING CAPACITY

A commitment to build capacity for the use of data through service to educators, parents, government and the public.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*	*ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE*
3.1 Promote the use of EQAO data for system-wide improvement.	▪ Guide policy and practice through an increased understanding of broader trends, comparative data and areas of concern through public release of results and other public reporting throughout the year.	▪ Identify and offer support in using EQAO data and resources to schools that continue to experience significant challenges in meeting the provincial achievement standards. ▪ Facilitate collaborative coaching sessions using an inquiry stance around the effective use of EQAO data and resources to improve teaching and learning. ▪ Using the model followed in creating the EQAO Reporting application for elementary and secondary school staffs, develop an EQAO Reporting site for members of the public.	▪ 4 Train the trainer workshops were held about the reporting application with 290 participants ▪ 15 Regional workshops were held with 590 participants ▪ The reporting application site for members of the public is currently under development
	▪ Build capacity among educational stakeholders.	▪ Conduct outreach activities with stakeholders to assist them in their role in supporting improved student learning such as: ✓ Presentations to Faculties of Education: teacher candidates and course directors ✓ Presentations and Regional Forums to parent groups, PICs and Associations ✓ Presentations to school and board staff on using data to improve student learning and to enhance deeper understanding of EQAO assessments and resources.	▪ 1 workshop at the OACPE conference with 30 participants was conducted ▪ 8 evening parent presentations with 725 participants were conducted ▪ 1 Parent Forum in the north was held with 28 participants ▪ 5 presentations to Faculties of Education were conducted with 404 participants ▪ 4 presentations to PQP candidates were conducted with 134 participants ▪ 1 presentation to a delegation from Indonesia was held with 5 participants ▪ 2 workshops for teachers, principals and directors of First Nation schools were held with 140 participants
	▪ Build capacity in schools to interpret and use EQAO data to inform school improvement planning and student achievement and to assist them in fulfilling their accountability mandate.	▪ Conduct outreach activities for principals and school teams such as: ✓ Regional learning forums ✓ Regional workshops ✓ Provide workshops for elementary and secondary principals and teacher-leaders in using the online site for EQAO reports in support of student achievement.	▪ 5 workshops about the reporting application were provided for elementary and secondary school principals and teacher leaders with 192 participants ▪ One workshop about the EQAO strategies document with 48 participants was held ▪ 16 consultations were conducted about Item Information Reports with 34 participants

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*	*ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE*
		✓ A Learning Forum, including the sharing of successful strategies, for the schools that are recipients of the 2013 Dr. Bette Stephenson Recognition of Achievement on the day following the event. ✓ Collection of Schools on The Journey of Learning (Success stories) ✓ Individual school visits and presentations ✓ Gather information from school teams to support EQAO research projects, as required. ✓ Continue a focus on Mathematics through learning forums for school teams.	▪ One presentation to a delegation from Denmark was conducted with 14 participants ▪ 13 interviews with schools to collect stories for Schools on the Journey of Learning with 61 participants were completed
		▪ Identify and offer support in using EQAO data and resources to schools that continue to experience significant challenges in meeting the provincial achievement standards. ▪ Continue the collaborative coaching initiative started in 2013	▪ One collaborative coaching session was held with 100 participants ▪ 17 Collaborative coaching visits were conducted with 98 participants
3.2 Ensure communication informs educational stakeholders, the public and the media effectively.	▪ Develop public release plans that ensure local and provincial coverage, and respond to significant issues raised constructively.	▪ For each public release, conduct a high reach media campaign that will achieve a 70% Media Relations Rating Point rating for pick-up of key messages and regional representation.	▪ Campaign evaluation in progress.
		▪ Monitor EQAO and education related issues in the media daily and respond constructively to significant issues raised through media coverage.	▪ Provided media responses around OCT hearing and subsequent censure of Principal responsible for EQAO irregularities ▪ Submitted an opinion editorial in the Windsor Star following an ETFO Windsor-Essex Forum ▪ Letter to the editor placed in Shoreline Week (Windsor area).
		▪ Leverage modern communication methods (i.e. infographics, videos, other rich media) when communicating with the public.	▪ Posted "How EQAO tests are created, administered and scored" video to the EQAO Web site with over 900 views since its launch.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*	*ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE*
			▪ Developed and published video logs to keep stakeholders informed of the move to online assessments. Three video logs have been posted to date and have earned over 2,000 views
		▪ Profile schools on a journey of learning that highlight the use of EQAO data and evidence to develop strategies for improving student achievement. Present the Dr. Bette M. Stephenson Recognition of Achievement to the schools.	▪ 27 School Stories: On the Journey of Learning were completed ▪ Invitations for the Dr. Bette Stephenson Recognition of Achievement dinner and learning forum have been sent to boards and special guests
	▪ Promote key EQAO documents to showcase the overall vision of the agency.	▪ Promote the use of *Achievement in Literacy and Numeracy in Ontario Schools from 2002 to 2013: Observations and Considerations for the Future.*	▪ This document is going to remain an internal document.
	▪ Effectively maintain stakeholder engagement and relationships through social media	▪ Maintain a corporate Facebook page and Twitter feed, LinkedIn company page and continue leveraging Vimeo and YouTube channels ▪ Develop and implement a schedule of annual corporate postings ▪ Engage in authentic conversations with stakeholders through these channels ▪ Regularly monitor and respond to issues raised on third party social media channels ▪ Monitor and evaluate social media strategy and policy for EQAO.	▪ The launch of EQAO's social media strategy is on hold until resourcing issues are resolved. A new position is being created to support this activity and recruitment should begin in Q4.
3.3 Leverage educator involvement in EQAO activities so it is viewed as positive and valuable professional development.	▪ Provide professional development opportunities that educators find positive and valuable.	▪ 85% of educators report finding scoring is a valuable professional development experience.	▪ Ratings were gathered by category of scoring participant: scorers, scoring leaders and supervisors and by program and subject. Overall, more than 90% of participants reported finding scoring to be a valuable professional development experience.

PRIORITY 4: VALUABLE RESEARCH DATA

A commitment to demonstrate that all practices of the agency are grounded in research-based knowledge.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*	*ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE*
4.1 Conduct research that investigates factors that influence student achievement and education quality, and into how the resulting data can inform the agency's work.	▪ Conduct research projects that contribute to improvement planning and/or enhancement of EQAO's large-scale assessment program.	▪ Complete the following research projects: 1. Identify criteria for collusion analysis and develop software to conduct the analysis. 2. Examine the relationships between report card marks and achievement on the EQAO assessments. 3. Indentify schools with high achievement levels for students in the applied courses. ▪ Conduct the following new research projects: 1. Review the definition of the literacy construct for the OSSLT and TPCL. 2. Identify research projects to provide additional validity evidence for the EQAO assessments. 3. Examine the impact of full-day kindergarten on Grade 3 EQAO assessments results.	▪ In process of developing a responsible study design to review and analyze the outcomes of students who participated in the initial launch of the FDK program
4.2 Showcase how research-based knowledge informs the agency's practices.	▪ Communicate research findings to our stakeholders to assist in education improvement.	▪ Submit EQAO research paper(s) for publication in educational research journals. ▪ Make presentations at the 2014 OAME conference. ▪ Identify strategies that assist parents understand EQAO results for school improvement planning.	▪ Presentation titled "Linking EQAO to 21st Century Skills" was delivered at the OAME conference in May
4.3 Provide interpretations of student achievement results based on research and analysis as part of public releases or in addition to public releases.	▪ Publish reports or additional information specifically related to research findings that connect to student achievement.	▪ Publish a research bulletin on effective practices for improving the achievement of students in applied courses.	▪ To be reported in Quarter 4

PRIORITY 5: EFFECTIVE BUSINESS PRACTICES

Strategically aligned business practices that enhance the agency's ability to focus on and deliver key priorities and commitments.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*	*ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE*
5.1 Uphold an effective governance framework that ensures accountability and efficient agency operations.	▪ Develop and implement governance policies, frameworks and operational protocols.	▪ Ensure that the agency's 2015-2016 Business plan is presented to the Minister by December 31, 2014, as per the Agency, Establishment and Accountability Directive.	▪ Finalizing the 2015-2016 Business Plan approved by the Board of Directors on December 10, 2014 and presented to the Minister of Education before December 31, 2014.
		▪ Deliver the Annual Report by July 31, 2014, as directed by the Memorandum of Understanding and the Agency Establishment and Accountability Directive.	▪ As directed by the Memorandum of Understanding and the Agency Establishment and Accountability Directive, the Annual report was delivered by July 31, 2014.
		▪ Undertake a strategic planning initiative to set out the priorities of the agency for the next business cycle.	▪ The EQAO Board of Directors engaged in a strategic planning exercise and approved the plan to undertake consultations in each region in Ontario to solicit feedback from key stakeholders on the direction of the agency for the next 3-5 years. Regional consultations are in progress and a public survey has been posted to the Web. Over 4,000 responses have been received to date.
		▪ Implement the Internal Operational Governance Framework pertaining to agency and board activities and responsibilities.	▪ Successfully rolled out the preliminary phase of the Internal Operational Governance Framework and will continue to refine the implementation process.
5.2 Ensure effective and efficient fiscal and business management processes.	▪ Maintain rigorous management practices and operate consistently with MBC directives and relevant federal and provincial legislation, including the EQAO *Act*.	▪ Ensure fiscal accountability by following rigorous financial practices and internal controls that are substantiated through audit reports.	▪ Maintain rigorous management practices to ensure compliance with MBC directives and relevant legislation. ▪ The Agency completed its March 31, 2014 year-end statement during Q1 and there were no findings or issues to report. ▪ Internal workshops were conducted to develop clarity and consensus on the desired brand characteristics for EQAO.
		▪ Establish and meet timelines within the procurement plan and contract award log to: comply with government procurement requirements; to ensure that procurement processes are fair, open, and transparent; and to ensure that the agency's business continues efficiently and effectively.	▪ Developed and executed numerous contract awards and renewals resulting from formal procurement processes in support of Agency service delivery initiatives and in keeping with approved government and EQAO practices.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*	*ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE*
	▪ Monitor business processes to improve fiscal and operational management.	▪ Review administrative protocols and procedures, based on an established schedule, to confirm they reflect effective and efficient business processes.	▪ Updated the 2014 OSSLT Review Protocol ▪ A review of the following administrative protocols and procedures has begun: Business Cards, Photo ID/Internal Security ▪ The Non Local Secondee Guideline was revised to ensure an updated and accurate reflection of current practice also to require more comprehensive travel information from non local secondees to support monthly travel expense claims. ▪ The internal procedure documenting the creation and maintenance of the EQAO Board of Directors photos was revised and finalized to align with current practice. ▪ A review of the following administrative protocols has begun/is in progress: Photo ID/Internal Security, Email, Fire Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Life Changing Events, Late Arrival/Absences, Training and Development ▪ In June 2014, all staff were advised of updates to the Hours of Work Protocol. ▪ In September 2014, rolled out the Scent Sensitivity Protocol and updated the *Scented Products in the Workplace: What You Need to Know* brochure. The brochure is available on Staffnet and posted around the office and given during orientation.
		▪ Respond to the recommendations in the Internal Auditor's Report.	▪ Completed
	▪ Develop and refine Health and Safety programs and processes to ensure a safe and healthy workplace.	▪ Continue to make enhancements to the health and safety database in order to produce value added reports and train new members, as necessary on the Health and Safety Committee database.	▪ In discussions with unions to formalize committee membership.
5.3 Build a supportive organizational culture that acknowledges staff achievement and benefits employees in their professional growth.	▪ Develop HR programs and approaches to support talent management and staff development.	▪ Offer a Professional Learning Program to staff members to promote a broad understanding of all EQAO practices.	▪ More than 50% of staff have completed the following mandatory e-learning training by the May 30, 2014, deadline: SafeSmart for Employees - and SafeSmart for Managers and Supervisors which is an eLearning programs that provides an overview of occupational health and safety, an understanding of the legislated responsibilities and information to support the prevention of workplace injuries and illnesses. ▪ Lunch N' Learn held – Sept 2014: Wellness Session (Hatha Restorative Yoga).

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*	*ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE*
	▪ Continuously value and regularly recognize the work and dedication of EQAO staff.	▪ Continue to recognize staff contributions regularly throughout the year and during quarterly all-staff and branch meetings.	▪ The Agency All Staff Meeting was held on September 8, 2014.
	▪ Develop HR programs and business practices to build a supportive organizational culture.	▪ Continue to ensure that the work of the HR unit aligns with the HR Commitments (formally HR Plan).	▪ The following have been completed in accordance with the HR Commitments (formally HR Plan): ▪ Two Lunch N' Learns – May 2014: Stress Relaxation Techniques and June 2014: The Sandwich Generation ▪ 11 Summer Students from various colleges and university programs have been hired to support various departments across the agency. ▪ Completed the recruitment process Public Inquiries Officer ▪ 40% of SMG and MCP excluded managers and human resources professionals have completed the "Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) Employment Standards" and the "IASR Information and Communication Standards" eCourses by the June 30, 2014, deadline.
		▪ Continue to explore and implement appropriate flexible work options for staff.	▪ In May 2014, information on EQAO's pilot flexible work arrangements for OPS regular and fixed term staff and a new Hours of Work protocol was posted and shared on Staffnet. In June 2014, the Agency put on hold compressed work week (CWW) agreements to communicate with the unions to clarify the work cycles and agreement terms. However, the process for all flex/staggered hours agreements has begun. ▪ In September 2014, the Agency received confirmation from the unions on the work cycles and agreement terms regarding CWW. CWW was formally introduced to all staff and will continue under a six month pilot.
5.4 Leverage technology to enhance EQAO operations and delivery of programs both internally and externally.	▪ Identify and implement new technologies to collect and report complex data and translate them into information and subsequently into knowledge that informs decision-making.	▪ By September 2014, provide school-board staff with interactive access to results and online training in the use of the resource and the effective use of data for school improvement planning. Provide enhancements to EQAO Reporting for principals.	▪ Item Information Reports (IIR) for PJ, Grade 9 and OSSLT implemented and delivered as part of EQAO Reporting. ▪ PJ, Grade 9 and OSSLT updates for 2014 were made based on feedback from the field. ▪ Established the train-the-trainer site for school board-delivered training. ▪ Incorporation of analytical reporting on the usage of the application and reports by schools and school boards.
		▪ Define the specifications for an enhanced reporting system to present EQAO results on the public Web site with interactive access to school and	▪ To be reported in Q4.

GOALS	*OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES*	*2014–2015 PERFORMANCE MEASURES*	*ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE*
		board results (in alignment with the Open Government initiative).	
	▪ Utilize technology to continuously improve the agency's efficiency and effectiveness.	▪ Ensure full integration of the EQAO public and secure Web sites on the SharePoint platform. Develop and deliver on a plan for continuous site enhancements based on user analytics and stakeholder feedback.	▪ New public web site development and SharePoint integration continues. Business process reviews are under way to improve cross agency Web publishing processes.
		▪ Field test the online administration and scoring system for EQAO assessments and develop a plan for the online administration system for EQAO assessments and develop a plan for the online administration of the OSSLT/TPCL.	▪ Developed implementation plan for EQAO Online initiative. ▪ Held consultations with numerous stakeholders groups. ▪ Public communication launch of EQAO Online took place September 10, 2014. ▪ Recruited schools for participation in November 2014 and field test of online solution.
		▪ Implement an Event Management System (EMS) designed to assist EQAO in managing events and hiring contract employees more efficiently and effectively.	▪ The public facing profile in EMS was launched in September 2014. ▪ Electronic event request form created to facilitate event procurement and approvals. ▪ EQAO has used the EMS to invite over 100 participants to three assessment development events.

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